

themselves. Some newspapers add agency news to the chronicle which means that the correspondent “signs things that he or she did not say”. In order to be a correspondent, says the author, you must have a perfect knowledge of the language of the country you are working in. In Italy there was the case of a German journalist who used the word “milkman” to describe a “fugitive” and a Spanish correspondent mistook a “musician” for an “accomplice”.

## 131 Some things that are not seen on the screen

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RAMON MIRAVITLLAS

This journalist-host of television opinion programmes refers to the ethical problems generated by this kind of audiovisual programme. The length of time allotted to the different interventions leads some questions to be posed. “The dictatorship of time”, as he calls it, allows only a superficial treatment of the subjects which leaves the spectator with a sense of recalcitrant frustration. The lack of time favours the more experienced speakers and jeopardises those who are not so used to the cameras. Thus, an Aids sufferer, a legal victim are eclipsed by the “usual predators”, be they politicians, sociologists, psychologist or guest journalists.

The author believes that the role of politicians should be “refounded” on private or public television channels. Here are some examples of things which happen nowadays. Politicians know that their time is limited. If they see that towards the end subjects which do not interest them are being touched upon they can undermine the presenter’s strategy by “booting the ball out of play”. Politicians can also agree upon questions they will be asked before going on screen. They can condition their participation to the absence of others who do not suit their interests. Some peripheral Administrations may condition their presence to that of representatives from other central Administrations in order to avoid comparison of the subject

matter. On some occasions, politicians make important statements when the debate is over or before it begins, but not in front of the microphone.

Miravitllas tackles the case of people who are paid to appear on television. The ethical problem is not solved by the journalist saying "no". Of course there are modest guests who not only request travelling expenses but also the equivalent of the wages they lose due to their television appearance.

Another behind-the-scenes problem is that television always provides a platform of expression for the same people, those who are best known in their jobs or professions.

Finally, the journalist deals with some questions related to television ethics. A question which for the time being he leaves unanswered.

## 143 From spectacularity to journalistic pollution

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MILAGROS PÉREZ OLIVA

In the eyes of the author there are two typologies of problems related to the ethics of the journalist. Some can be approached from the point of view of individual ethics, and in these cases conscientious objection is an important instrument for journalists when faced with extreme situations. Other problems affect the truth, equanimity and the rigour of information. These problems require collective deontological norms. The adoption of the deontological Code by a medium is the best guarantee its receivers can have. Application of the Code is a priority objective for obtaining the credibility of journalists.

The author refers to three possible phenomena in journalistic ethics, all of them interrelated: the growing trend towards spectacularity, the interdependence of all the media which make up the communications system and the subsequent journalistic contamination. Going further into the first trend the journalist underlines the "spectacular" way in which news about health reaches the media: surprising headlines about biology, genetics which

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